



15 October 2004



SAFETY ALERT

Soldier Killed in Car Crash

First Car Death of FY 05

1. Last Saturday one of our Soldiers was killed in a car crash. The driver of the car in which the Soldier was riding lost control on a curve, and the vehicle broadsided a tree and was sheared in half. Even though the details of the crash are not known, there are things we do know that can prevent senseless tragedies such as this.
2. Over the last 12 months we have lost eight USAREUR Soldiers to off-duty vehicle crashes. Most of these crashes could have been prevented if a leader had effectively intervened, or if the Soldier had met "Under the Oak Tree" beforehand with his or her first-line supervisor.
3. At our Commanders Safety Council meeting last week, we laid out some straight-forward directions for leaders concerning Under the Oak Tree contracts. These contracts simply cannot be optional. Leaders must not allow Soldiers to go on pass or leave without first conducting an honest "Under the Oak Tree" meeting to discuss the Soldier's plans. This includes agreeing to alternatives to driving or riding with someone who is under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
4. Soldiers, however, are ultimately responsible for their own safety. As we begin a new fiscal year, I ask Soldiers to review basic safety rules and renew their commitment to act responsibly, both on and off duty. In addition, Soldiers should—
 - Be honest and open with their leaders about their off-duty plans when meeting Under the Oak Tree.
 - Not take chances behind the wheel or let others do so. Soldiers are responsible for their own safety, regardless of who is driving.
 - Not drive after drinking or let others drive after drinking. Use another means to get home.
 - Learn defensive-driving techniques and use them.
 - Buckle up when traveling in vehicles, whether riding in the front or back seat.
 - Take care of themselves and others, and intervene if necessary to prevent someone from getting hurt.

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5. Most importantly, each of us must continue to make sound off-duty risk-management decisions. This process should be second nature in all we do. I am absolutely convinced that at least one of you reading this is alive today because of this process. Leaders and Soldiers are making good risk-management decisions about things they never considered before. It is easy to count fatalities; it is much more difficult—but much more important—to count the lives we have saved by simply taking time to consider the risks involved in our plans and modifying our activities accordingly.

6. Ensure that this safety alert is given widest possible distribution by forwarding it electronically and posting it on unit bulletin boards. I want every Soldier to read this message and make a personal commitment to *No Loss of Life* by acting responsibly in FY 05. Let us take care of each other as we continue to execute with excellence, Any Mission, Anywhere.



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General, USA
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